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USSR: Nationalities Developments Elsewhere

Azerbaijan

The rail blockade of Armenia resulting from the Azeri Front-led protests strike is now fully in effect. The Front is calling for the Azeri government to resign. Meanwhile, the Russian Republic legislature, noting the strike's nationwide economic costs, has urged Azeri officials to "normalize" the situation. Azeri leaders' appeals to the strikers, however, have been ineffective.

Turkmenistan

Moscow yesterday announced the Supreme Soviet in Turkmenistan has elected a new premier by secret ballot. This marks the first time a republic premier has been chosen in a multicandidate election. Former premier Khodzhamuradov was reprimanded and dismissed last month for negligence.

Estonia

Estonian ideology secretary Titma reportedly has told his party's newspaper he is certain Estonia will eliminate from its constitution the legal guarantee of the Communist party's leading role in political life, opening the way for a multiparty coalition. Estonian hopes that Moscow will tolerate a multiparty system in the republic undoubtedly have been raised by the developments in Eastern Europe.

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USSR: **Leningrad Party Challenging Moscow's Reform Agenda**

Leningrad party boss Boris Gidaspov appears to be leading a political rebellion against radical reform that remains isolated for now but has the potential to spur a broader traditionalist rebellion in the Russian Republic party organization.

The Leningrad party's resolutions published this week denounced many aspects of General Secretary Gorbachev's agenda. They attacked both economic reform, which could "restore the bourgeois system," and "newfound pseudodemocrats," who are criticizing the party and distorting its history. The Leningrad party demanded the formation of a Russian Republic party organization and an enlarged plenum of the Central Committee to discuss the political situation in the party and the country. The resolutions threaten that, unless a plenum is held, "we shall consider it necessary to hold a partywide debate on this question."

In a *Pravda* interview and speech last month, Gidaspov echoed many of the demands of Russian chauvinists and party traditionalists. He praised the United Workers Front of Russia, which opposes *perestroyka*, for its "patriotic position" and its emphasis on order, stability, and defense of the working class.

Comment: Leningrad's reaction, if not quashed by the Politburo, may galvanize other regional organizations to act independently. Last July Gorbachev replaced Leningrad party boss Solov'yev with Gidaspov, who had a reputation as an innovative technocrat and as being strongly proreform.

There have been signs of reaction by other party officials in Moscow and the Urals. The party apparatus and the regional KGB in Sverdlov forced the conviction of a dissident last week on charges of slandering the KGB, an accusation reportedly not used since 1986. Signs of revolt in other Russian Republic party organizations may have resonance in the national leadership as well, emboldening traditionalists and moderates to try to reshape Gorbachev's reformist agenda by promoting a populist philosophy designed to win broad support among the blue-collar workers increasingly dissatisfied with economic reform.

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EAST GERMANY: Communist Party Loses Its Legal Monopoly

East Germany's Communist party lost its legal monopoly of power yesterday, and roundtable talks next week will set the terms for free elections.

In its first televised session, the East German legislature yesterday eliminated the constitutional guarantee of the party's leading role. One legislator complained that the new government still is moving too slowly on economic reform and called for restoring the traditional territorial units—the *Laender*—to break the power of the state apparatus.

Yesterday, the Karl Marx Stadt branch of the New Forum opposition group called for a general strike on the eve of the roundtable talks, which are to discuss free elections and other political reforms. The call was opposed by Baerbel Bohley, a national leader of the group.

Pressure to put former party leaders on trial is increasing rapidly. On Thursday, New Forum and a local government official filed charges against former party boss Erich Honecker and his associates for illegal use of public assets. Honecker's successor, Egon Krenz, has intensified public criticism of his former superiors while protesting his own innocence of corruption. A special Central Committee session will convene tomorrow to hear a report on leadership corruption and to consider remedies.

Comment: The sudden end to the party's *de jure* monopoly of power makes the date and the procedures for democratic elections the key issue at the roundtable talks. In the longer run it sets the stage for a more genuine coalition government in which the Communists and perhaps even popular Premier Modrow may end up playing minor roles. The Czechoslovak example may be behind the call for a general strike, which, if heeded, will put great pressure on the party and on the government to agree to radical electoral reforms.

Legal proceedings against former party leaders may force a showdown between party reformers and hardliners as early as tomorrow's Central Committee session over how far to go with a purge. Krenz will surely face pressure from all factions to step down because he is tainted with suspicion and is widely disliked by the public. A clean sweep of the old guard seems increasingly likely at the mid-December congress.

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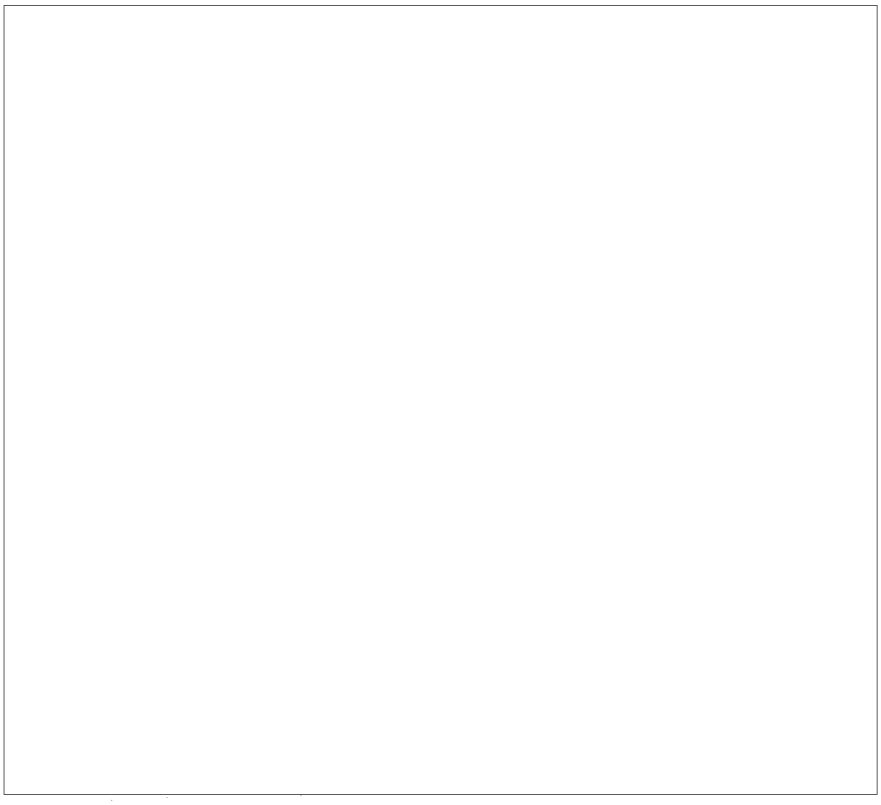

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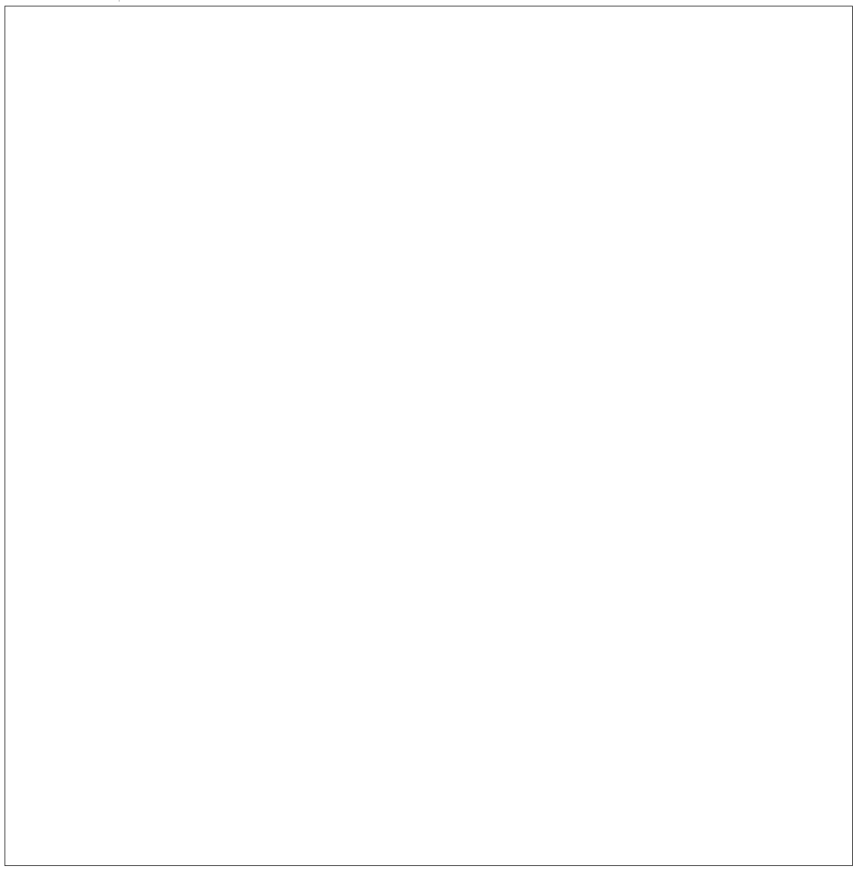

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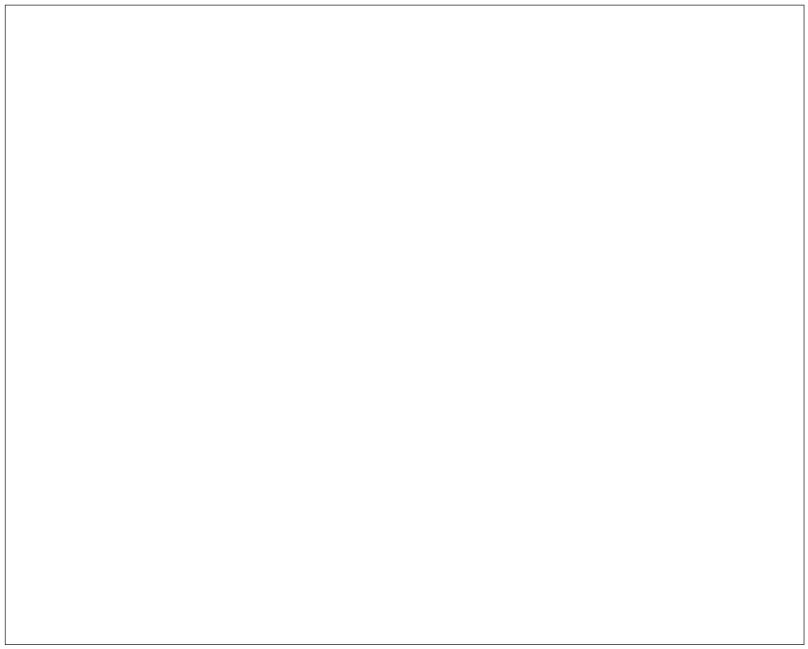

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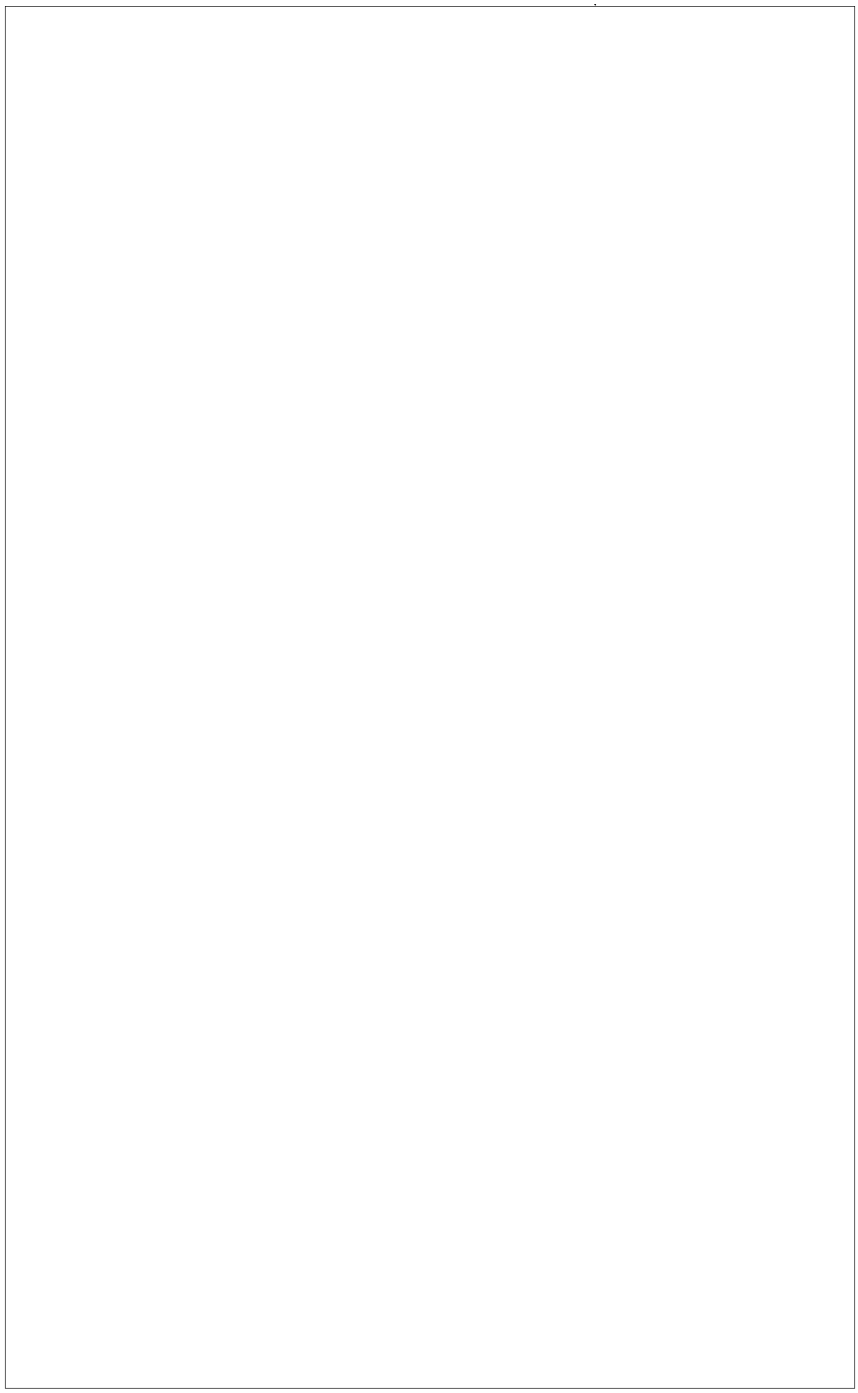

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The Cooling Relationship Between Roh and Chung

Chung Ho Yong's relationship with President Roh goes back nearly 40 years. They were high school and Korean Military Academy classmates and were key players in the 1979 coup that brought Chun Doo Hwan to power. Various reports indicate Chung played a decisive role in the designation of Roh as the ruling-party presidential candidate in 1987 and in helping Roh build his political base.

Nonetheless their relationship has cooled considerably over the past year as Roh has steadily distanced himself from Chung and other leading figures from the Chun era. Roh last December resisted strong pressure to give Chung, the only ruling-party leader who has the stature to challenge Roh's leadership, a major party post. As calls for Chung's resignation have increased, Roh has repeatedly refused Chung's requests for a meeting.

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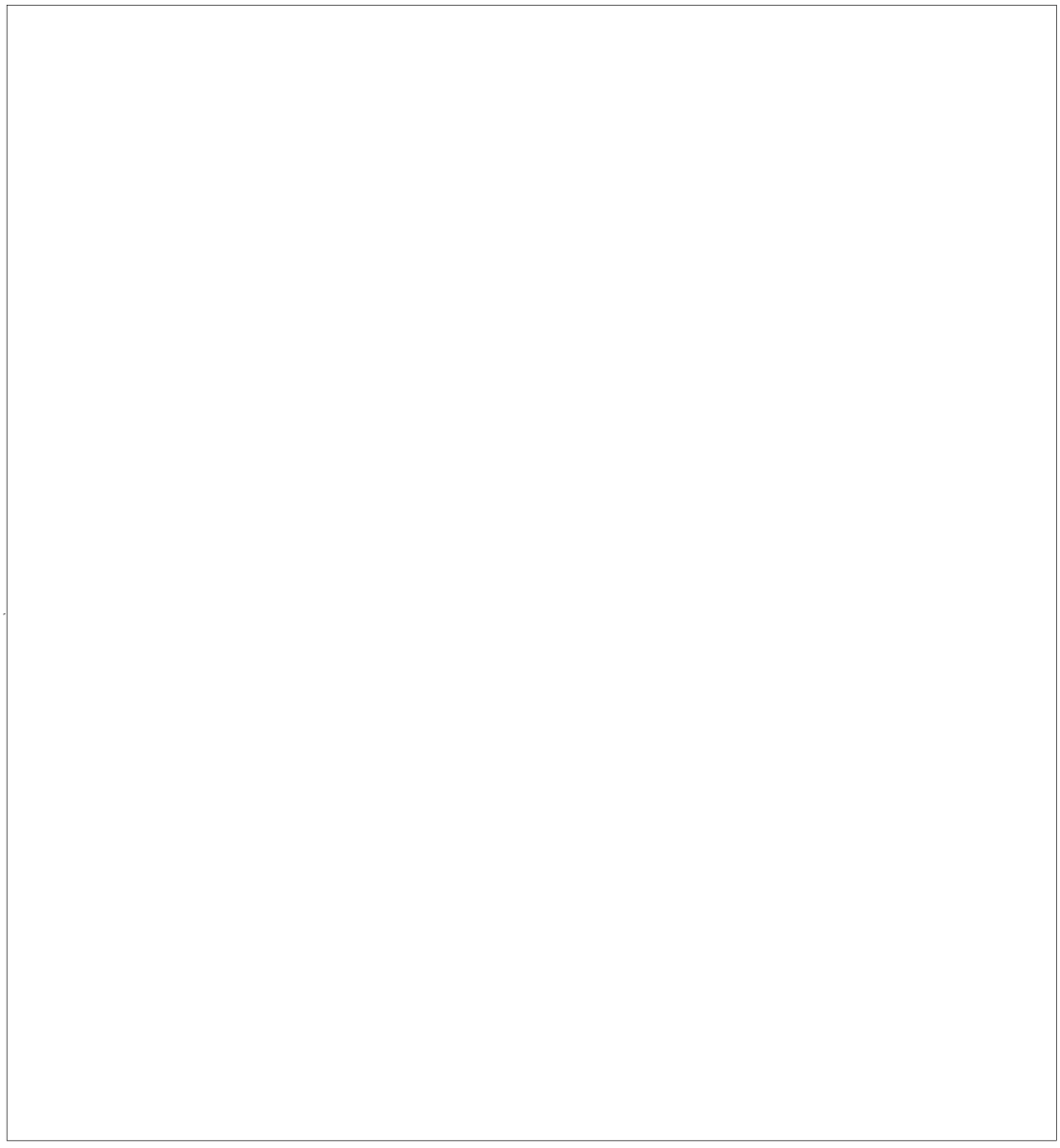

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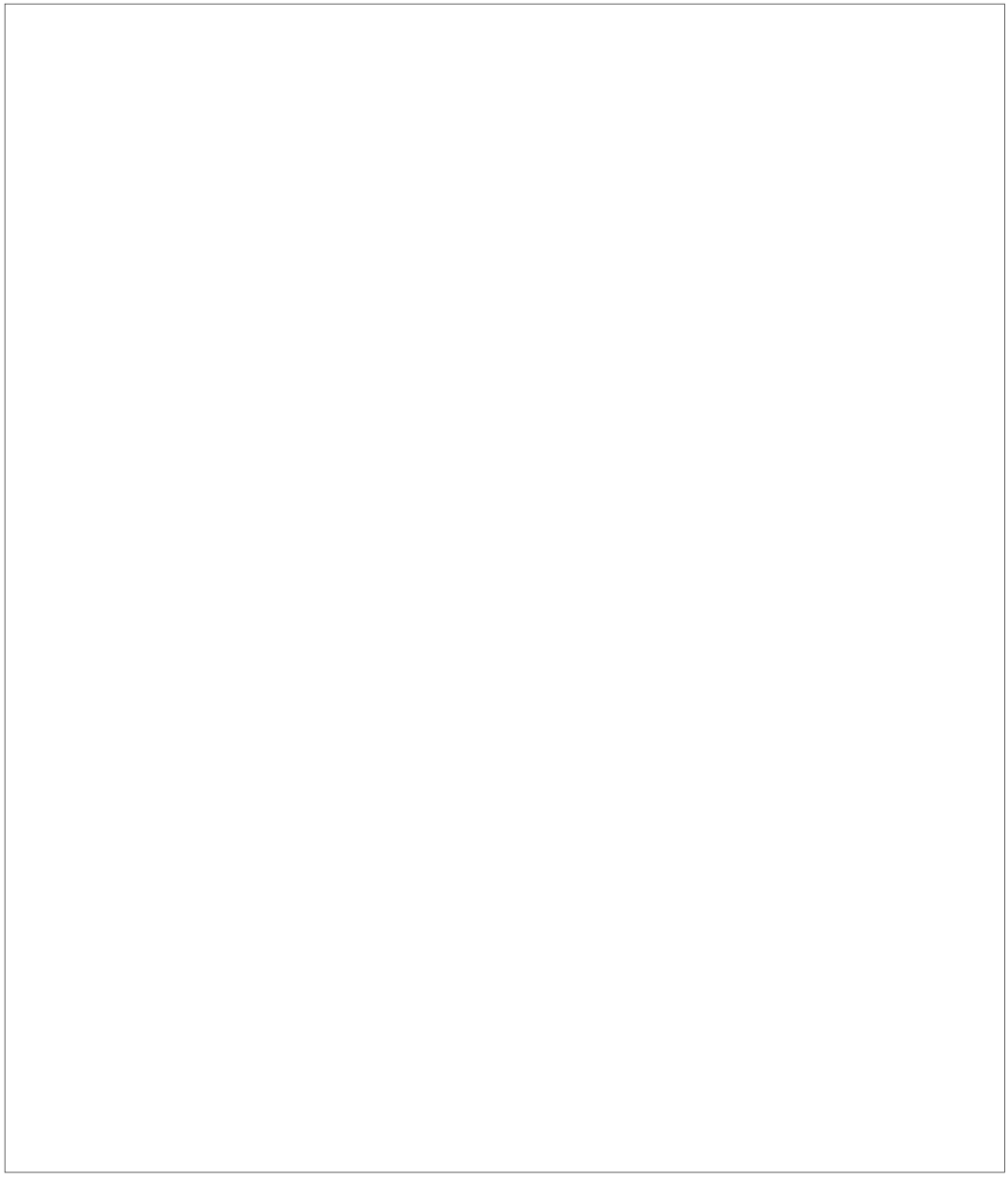

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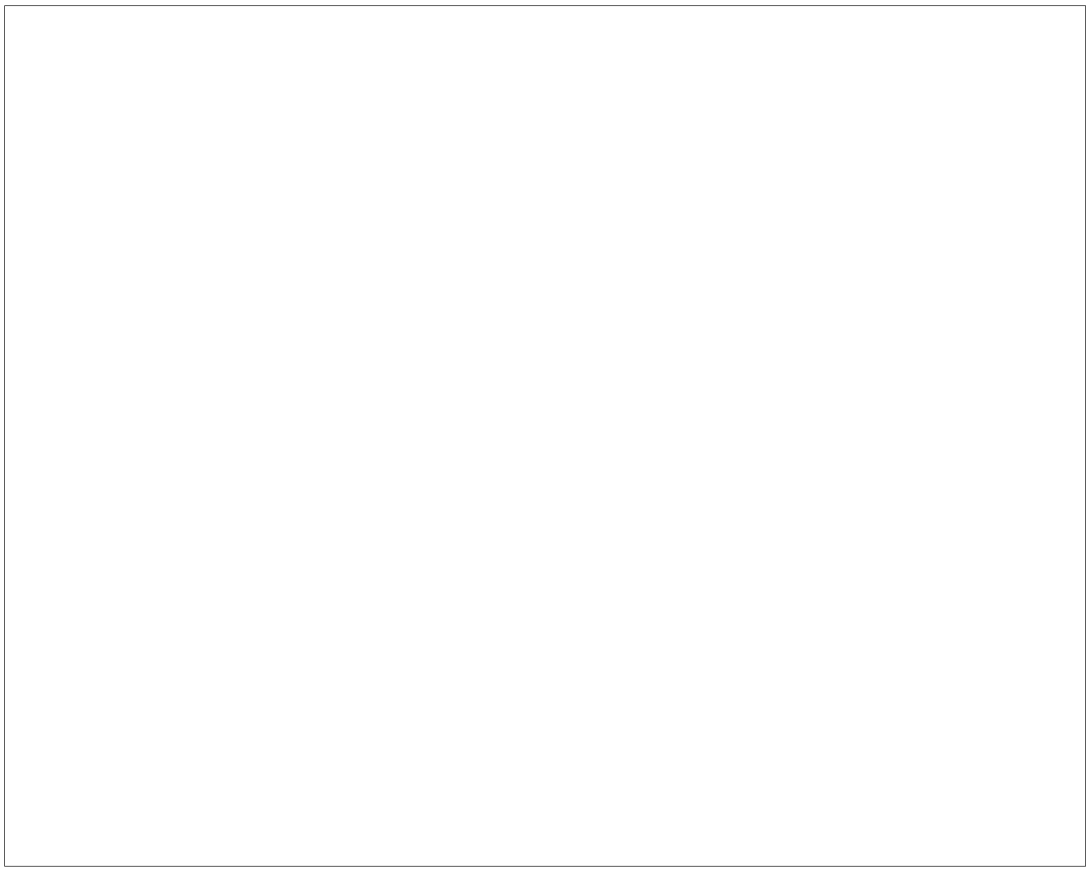

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USSR: The Leningrad Party Organization

The Leningrad party—the second largest in the Russian Republic—has been a bulwark of orthodoxy since the late 1940s when Stalin crushed it and had its leaders executed. A former first secretary, Lev Zaykov, is a traditionalist who now serves as Gorbachev's deputy on the Defense Council. The party machinery is dominated by managers and industrial workers. The United Workers Front of Russia held its organizational meeting in Leningrad in July and has won some worker support since then.

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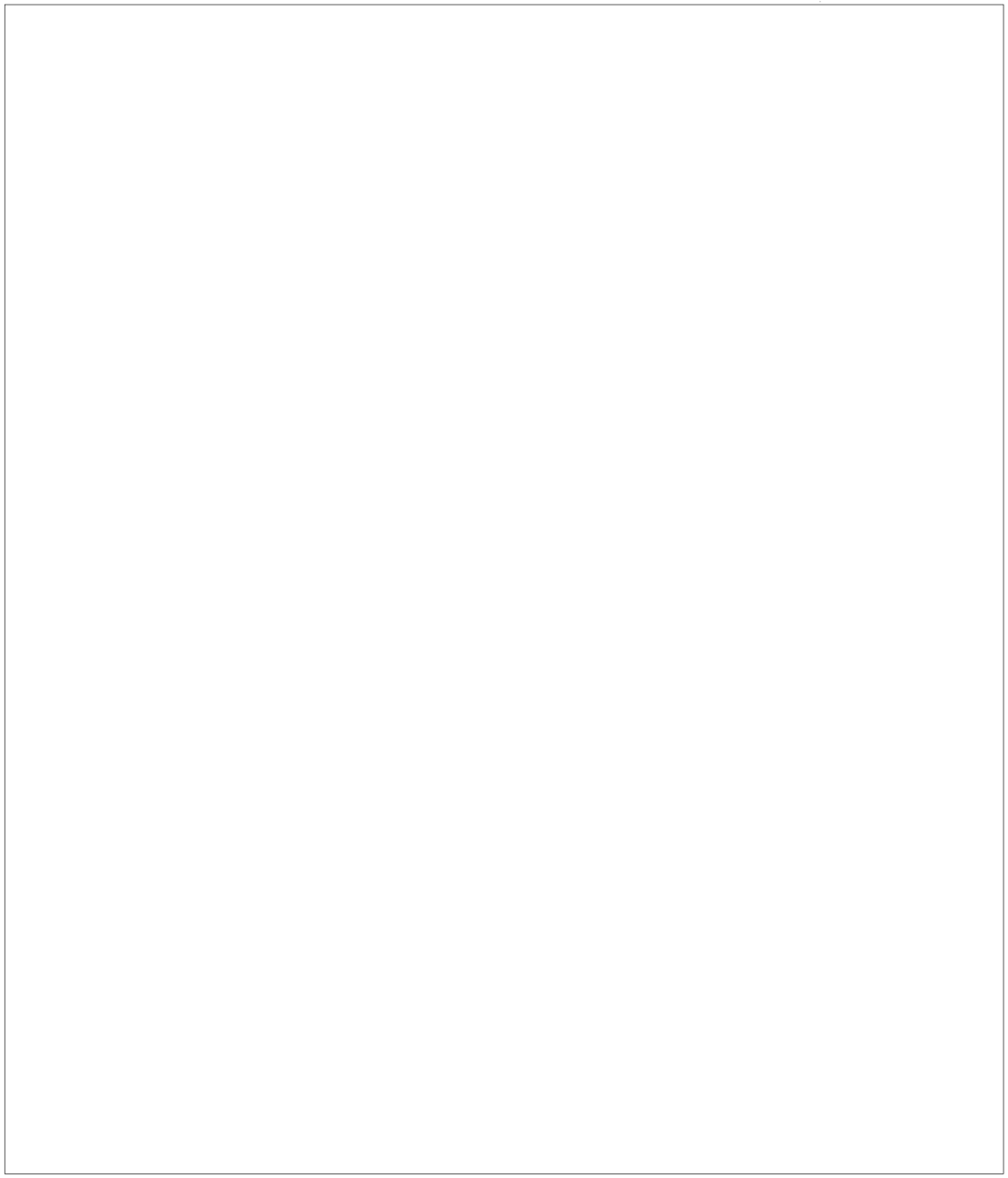

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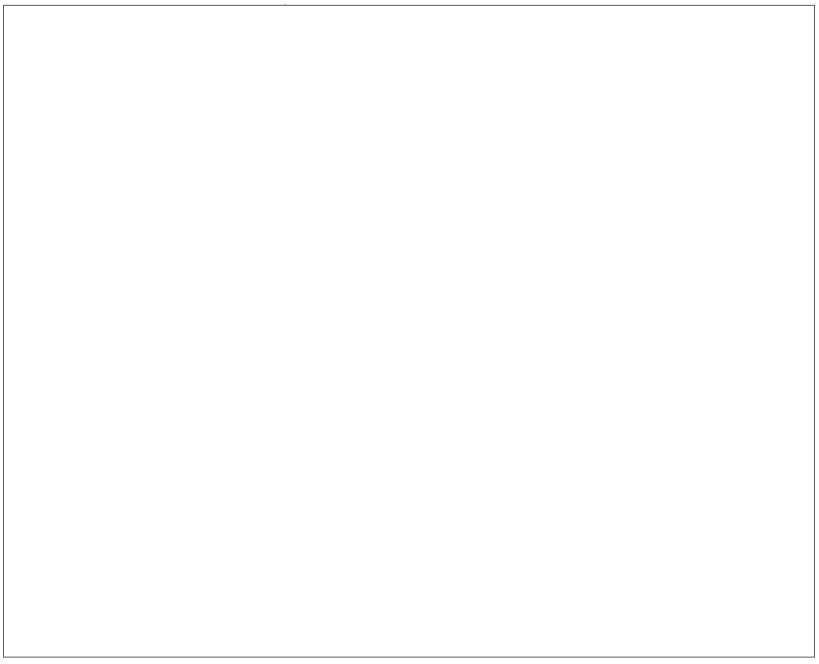
USSR: Gorbachev Cautions Lithuanian Party

Politburo member Medvedev, party secretary for ideology, yesterday read a message from General Secretary Gorbachev to the Lithuanian Central Committee urging the republic party drop plans to consider independence from the CPSU at its congress this month. Gorbachev argued that party unity is essential for the success of *perestroyka*, although he conceded that each republic party should have its own program. Medvedev criticized Lithuanian party boss Brazauskas by name for deviating from Moscow's policies. The Lithuanian Central Committee reportedly continues to refuse to change its plans. At a meeting last month, the Politburo had unsuccessfully sought to persuade Lithuanian party leaders to alter their course.

Comment: Gorbachev's balanced message contrasts with the reportedly harsh tone of the decision the Politburo issued after its meeting with the Lithuanian party leaders. Their apparent refusal to back down may spur Moscow to threaten to deny a maverick party the benefits the republic party now enjoys, such as a voice in national party decisionmaking. More likely, it will compromise, seeking to preserve at least the appearance of continuity, perhaps by allowing Lithuanian Communists to register with the national party even if they join a newly independent party.



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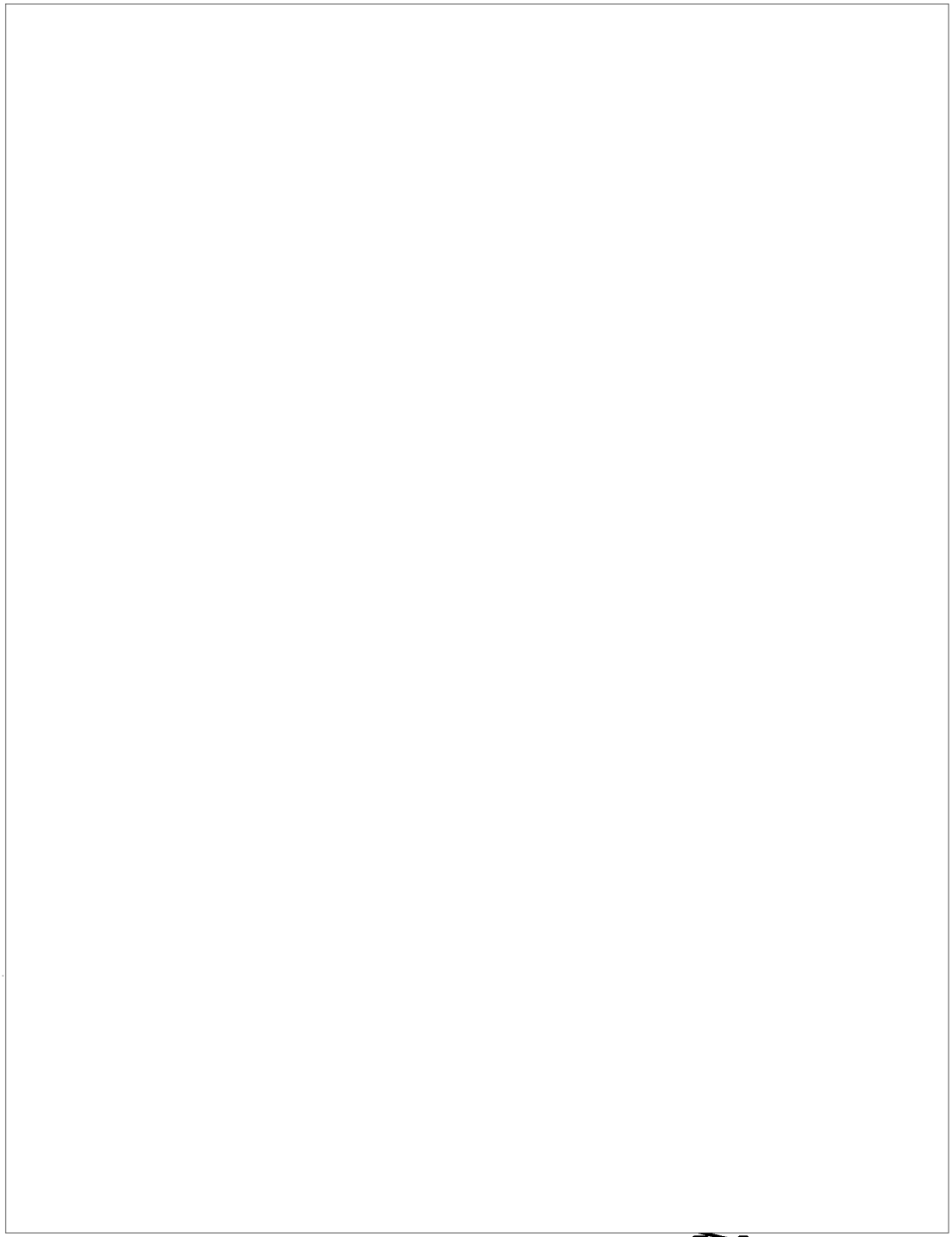

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CZECHOSLOVAKIA: Communist Party Falling Apart

The splintering of the Communist Party is eroding both the ability of hardliners to interfere in democratization and the party's potential role in determining Czechoslovakia's future.

The party's Presidium, led by General Secretary Urbanek, appears incapable of curbing rank-and-file demands for radical changes in the party. The powerful Prague city party organization, for example, has rejected the recent Central Committee shuffle as inadequate, according to Western press reports. The Democratic Forum of Communists, a reform wing of the party, is demanding abolition of the People's Militia, the party's paramilitary force, and has expressed agreement with the Civic Forum's platform. It may turn to Dubcek-era reform Communists—or even to Dubcek himself—to bolster its legitimacy. A group of Slovak reform Communists expelled from the party after the Soviet-led invasion in 1968 have established a Democratic Socialist Party and hope to attract party members and others willing to support political pluralism.

Although some party officials outside Prague are demanding that "order be restored," other apparatchiks are beginning to worry about their futures.

Comment: The calls by hardliners to reassert party domination appear to have little backing from the rank and file, and their fears of ouster are probably justified. Many reformists, formerly silenced by the hardline leadership, are beginning to show their true colors. As long as hardliners control the Central Committee, however, the more radical reformers probably will defect to newly formed socialist parties or simply defy orders from the leadership.

General Secretary Urbanek must react to these changes soon if he is to regain control and prevent the party's eclipse. At the next Central Committee plenum on 14 December, he may try to move up the extraordinary party congress, scheduled for late next month, in an effort to purge the party of hardliners. If he fails to stem the party's disintegration, it could end up with little or no voice in a future government coalition.

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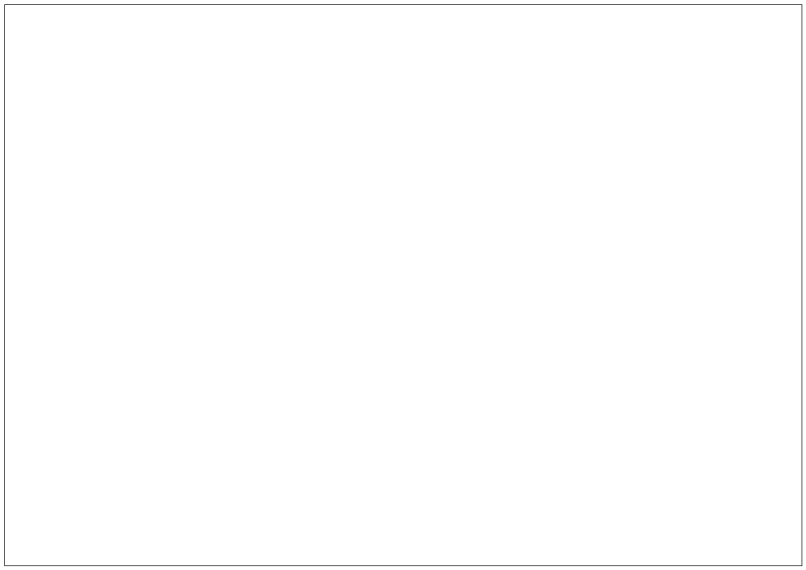

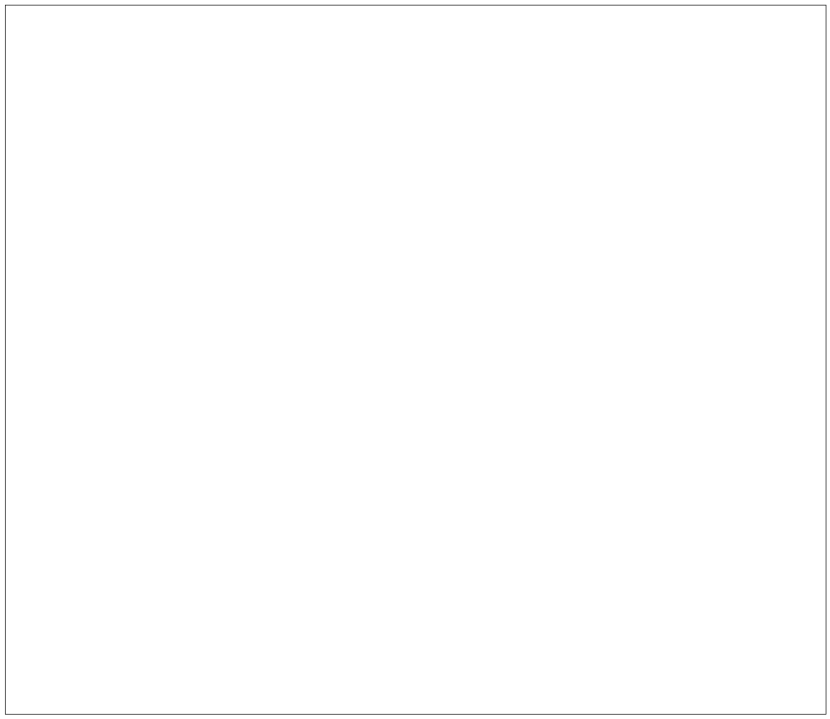

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SOUTH KOREA: Political Controversy Awaits Roh

When he returns from Europe Monday, President Roh will meet with opposition leaders to end the National Assembly's yearlong deadlock over how to address the abuses of the previous government.

The opposition continues to demand that former President Chun testify before the Assembly about alleged graft and repression under his government. It also insists that lawmaker Chung Ho Yong, commander of troops responsible for suppressing the Kwangju uprising in 1980, resign his seat. Last month the opposition called on Roh to meet its terms by mid-December or to face a unified campaign to unseat him next year. most Koreans support opposition demands for a thorough investigation of alleged Chun-era misdeeds.

A stormy round of meetings aimed at reaching a compromise have highlighted ruling party infighting on the issue. Roh and other ruling-party leaders see a deal with the opposition as the best way to move ahead with social and political reforms they hope will better position the party for the presidential election in 1992. But influential hardliners are threatening to bolt the party if Chung is forced to resign, making party leaders skeptical that Roh will meet opposition demands.

Comment: Roh may try to work out an agreement—for example set a date for Chun's testimony and defer Chung's resignation—to give an impression of progress while avoiding a damaging split in his party. He may hope that such a move would placate Chun who is frustrated by his yearlong exile at a Buddhist temple and is hinting he will reveal damning information if he is not allowed to resume a normal life soon. The opposition might meet Roh halfway in the near term in order to dampen public criticism that it is delaying reform by pursuing the investigation for partisan purposes.

With only three years left in his five-year term, Roh nevertheless may believe he must strike a deal that will put the issue behind him so he can proceed with his own political program. Roh may take advantage of mounting pressure for a solution to impose a tough decision on his party. He took similar action last fall, when he persuaded hardliners to bow to opposition demands for a public apology from Chun rather than risk fueling widespread demonstrations.

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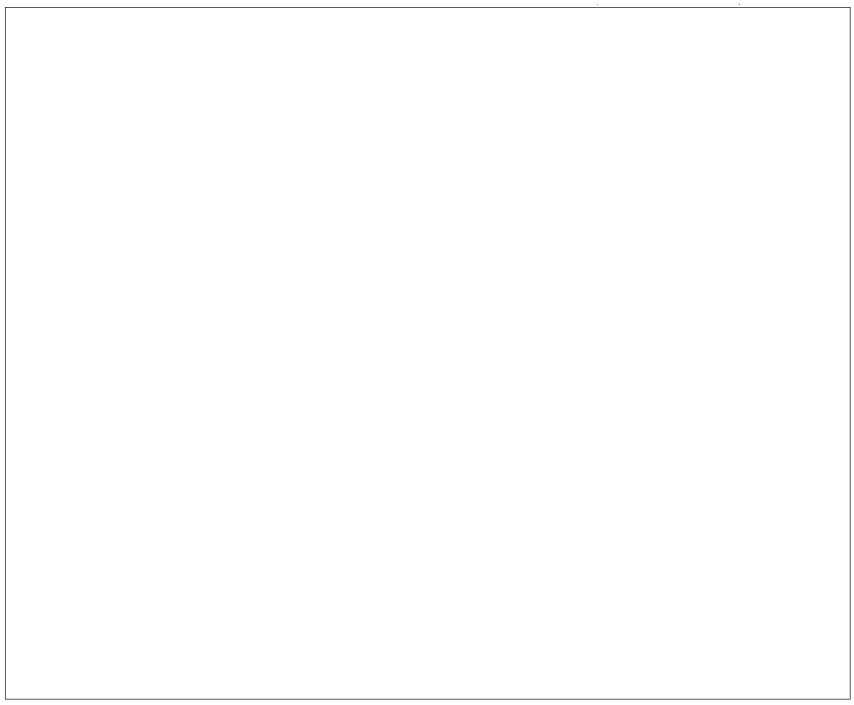

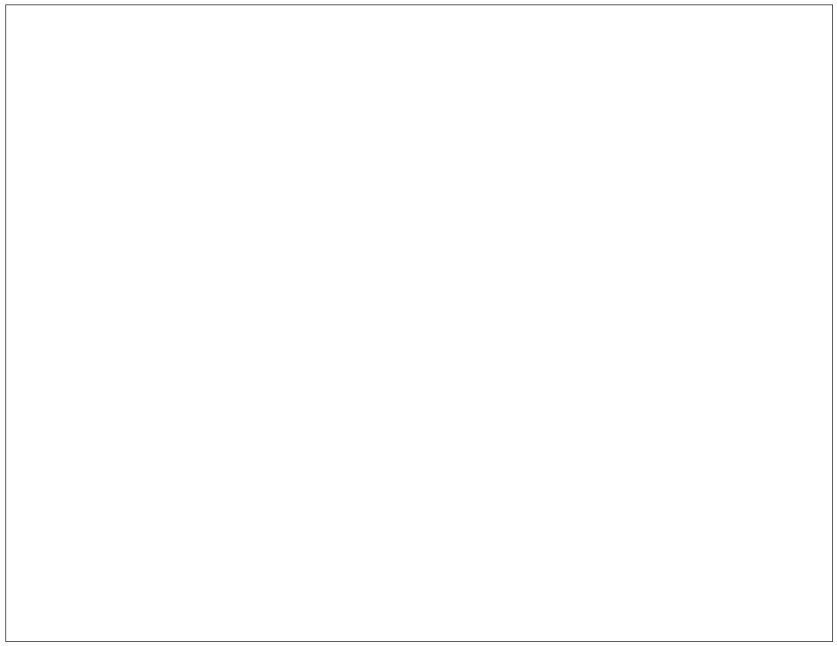

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